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Dana E. Katz. *The Jewish Ghetto and the Visual Imagination of Early Modern Venice*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017. Illustrations. 202 pp. \$99.99 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-107-16514-4.

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When the Venetian Senate ordered the creation of a ghetto in 1516, it not only instituted a discriminatory regime of forced residency for Jews but also created a Jewish space in the city. That Jewish space would soon take on characteristic architectural features, becoming a highly visible and easily recognizable neighborhood in the Venetian cityscape. As Dana E. Katz astutely observes, the ghetto should have kept Jews away and out of view, but instead the ghetto area's architecture brought heightened attention to the presence of Jews in the city. Katz studies the ghetto as a "paradox of urban space," for "ghetto urbanism, marked by its exaggerated elevations and architectural asymmetries, created a crisis of visibility in that its singularity drew attention from Christians and Jews alike" (p. 2). In this original and beautifully illustrated book, Katz dissects the ghetto's architecture and visual appearance to understand how space and sight structured Jewish life and Jewish-Christian relations in early modern Venice.

Much is known about the history of Jews in the ghetto of Venice. From the religious and economic circumstances that led to the creation of the ghetto, to how Jews dealt with and felt about living in a confined and segregated space, to the continued fluidity of Jewish-Christian relations despite the ghetto walls, to the dynamism of Jewish social and religious life in the ghetto, and even to the food of the ghetto—all of these topics have been the object of detailed studies. However, the spatial and sensory significance of the ghetto has not received as much attention. Using a combination of archival and architectural evidence and drawing on the work of historians and scholars of visual culture, Katz closes that gap and allows

her readers to "see Venice with ghetto eyes" (p. 15). Doing so, she not only explores an important, albeit understudied, aspect of ghettoization but also joins a growing number of scholars who have placed spatial, temporal, and sensory questions at the heart of their study of early modern life.[1] After many years in which the study of social and intellectual history was prominent, it seems scholars are again heeding Marc Bloch's and Lucien Febvre's call for "une histoire totale," a history that includes all aspects of past life, including sensorial knowledge such as sight, touch, and smell.[2] Sensorial information may be hard to come by using textual sources, but it is a worthwhile effort as senses are central to one's life and experiences. Placing the architecture and visibility of the ghetto at the center of her inquiries, Katz participates in this new trend.

Chapter 1 starts with an examination of Giovanni Merlo's cartographic drawing of Venice. Merlo's bird's-eye view is incredibly detailed. One can almost see the individual houses on each block of the city, and yet, as Katz shows, Merlo has homogenized the city. He "aestheticizes ... [Venice's built] reality in favor of a unified order that screens out difference" (p. 26). Thus in Merlo's map, the Ghetto Nuovo, whose buildings towered high above the rest of the city's built structures, looked just like the surrounding neighborhoods. Merlo's representation of the ghetto occluded Jews' spatial and architectural marginality. The ghetto's location was on the periphery of Venice, in an area without churches and surrounded by narrow canals, and overcrowding had produced high-rising architecture seen nowhere else on the lagoon. But while Merlo represented the ghetto as it should have

been—that is, inconspicuous—the ghetto was, in fact, excessively visible.

This bothered Venetian authorities, whose attempts to legislate and control Jews' built environment and their sight are examined by Katz in chapter 2. But first, Katz provides a helpful overview of Venetian policy toward foreigners. Venice was tolerant of foreigners, especially if they were engaged in trade; however, that tolerance went hand in hand with practices of segregation and surveillance. Jews were not the only ones with compulsory housing: German merchants (Protestants) had to live in the Fondaco dei Tedeschi, and in the seventeenth century, Muslims were required to live in the Fondaco dei Turchi. However, both Fondaci were for traders visiting the ghetto for determined periods of time, whereas the ghetto was to be Jews' permanent residence. Guards were stationed outside of the ghetto, and on a boat, and the ghetto's doors were closed every night. Still, Jews were not enclosed enough; in the 1560s, Venetian authorities sought to also preclude visual access by ordering the walling up of windows, balconies, and doors. From the margins of the city to which they had been relegated, Jews could still see Venice and its inhabitants; in fact, their high buildings and balconies made it seem as if they were the ones surveilling the city. Thus, their visual access to it had to be renegotiated and restricted. Katz compares the situation of Jews to that of nuns whose vistas on the outside world were also restricted. And she engages with longstanding historiographical debates on the ghetto: while historian Robert Bonfil suggests that the ghetto gave Jews a "natural and unexceptional" place in Venice, Katz argues that "while the ghetto complex was incorporated within larger civic society, its urban involvements never naturalized the Jewish presence in Christian Venice" (p. 65).[3]

In chapter 3, Katz explores windows as liminal spaces that joined interior and exterior, and where the eyes of insiders and outsiders crossed. Bodily Jews could be enclosed by walls and a gate; however, light, sight, and vistas traversed the walls through windows, openings, and cracks. The *Libro Grande*, a record of the ghetto's governing body, which was preserved in a contemporary Italian translation, reveals that Jews' resistance to enclosing ghetto apertures was fierce (in fact, significantly more so than in the case of other state orders). The reasons for such resistance were related to hygiene and health concerns, but also to anxieties about growing civil isolation. By contrast, for Christian Venetians walling up the windows was about safeguarding the religious and social purity of the city, and "ensur[ing] that the surveillance of

the social body was defined from the inside out" (p. 83).

Moving from windows and openings to the physical structures that surrounded them, Katz's final chapter focuses on the "architectural wall as it implicates ... sight and touch to query the boundaries erected around the senses, to interrogate sensing as a mediator of urban experience" (p. 85). For, indeed, whereas windows offered contact with the outside world through transparency, walls were opaque and could not be passed through. Drawing on the works of Walter Benjamin, George Simmel, Richard Sennet, Elizabeth Harvey, Katherine Fischer Taylor, and Benjamin Ravid, Katz shows that she is as comfortable with modern philosophers, sociologists, historians, and art historians, as she is with early modern art, architecture, and text. She is also sensitive to how Jews' experiences of enclosure shifted throughout the day and especially at night when darkness enveloped them and the ghetto gates had to be closed. And yet, despite the thickness of the ghetto walls and increased surveillance at night, the boundaries between the ghetto and the city continued to display signs of permeability. The ghetto walls were meant to protect the innocence of Christian Venice at night, but Katz shows that instead the ghetto's tall tenements provoked increased anxiety about Jews' sexuality, which, in turn, led to more policing and control. In Katz's writing the paradoxes of ghetto urbanism unfold in a series of concentric circles: Jews had to be invisible, but overcrowding turned the ghetto into one of the lagoon's more distinctive neighborhoods; Jews' bodies needed to be a-physical, but the ghetto's conspicuous architecture functioned as a constant reminder of the reality and carnality of Jews' bodies; and finally, rather than assuaging persistent anxieties about Jewish presence in the city, the ghetto heightened them.

The conclusion of the book is a little short at three pages, but other than that this is an original and eye-opening book. It explores Jews' experience of ghettoization in Venice through architecture, sight, and touch. It is not easy to investigate early modern sensorial experiences. Jews did not write how touching the ghetto walls felt, or how much light could nonetheless seep in through closed-up windows, yet Katz, using all the tools available to a twenty-first-century scholar, probes these questions with subtlety and complexity, and, doing so, shines a new light on the realities of ghetto life.

Notes

[1]. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphart, and Alexandra Nocke, "Introduction: Exploring Jewish Space," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*,

ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphart and Alexandra Nocke (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1-26; Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); Don Harran, *Salamone Rossi: Jewish Musician in Late Renaissance Mantua* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Elliot Horowitz, "Coffee, Coffee-Houses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry," *AJS Review* 14, no. 1 (1989): 17-46.

[2]. Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, ed. Peter Burke

(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992); and Lucien Febvre, "A New Kind of History," in *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Lucien Febvre*, ed. Peter Burke (London: Routledge, 1973), 27-43.

[3]. Robert Bonfil, "Change in the Cultural Patterns of a Jewish Society in Crisis: Italian Jewry at the Close of the Sixteenth Century," in *Essential Papers on Jewish Culture in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. David B. Ruderman (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 410.

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